



Portmarnock Community School

School Self-Evaluation 2023-2024

At Portmarnock Community School, our School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process is central to our commitment to continuous improvement. This process enables our school community to identify and celebrate effective practices while actively working on areas that will further enhance teaching and learning for all students. It's about empowering our school to drive its own development, focusing on evidence-based action planning.

Our Primary Focus for 2023-2024: Inclusion Through Questioning

For the 2023-2024 academic year, our School Self-Evaluation focused on **"Inclusion through Questioning"**. This focus evolved from our previous efforts in 2022-2023, which addressed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student socialisation and their willingness to participate in class discussions. Initially, we concentrated on Differentiation, and subsequently broadened this to "Inclusion." To embed these crucial strategies, we decided to center our efforts around effective questioning techniques.

This approach is linked directly to 'Looking at our Schools Teaching and Learning Domain: Learner Experiences', aiming to ensure students engage purposefully in meaningful learning activities and grow as learners through challenging and supportive interactions. The goal was to increase student voice, improve social skills and confidence in class, boost engagement, foster self-reliance and self-esteem, and ultimately, enhance student motivation.

Subject Departments across the school actively participated by:

- Analysing results from summer assessments to identify strengths and areas for improvement.
- Selecting and implementing specific questioning strategies, often guided by resources on effective questioning.
- Implementing these strategies throughout the year, with ongoing analysis and comparison of results.

Significant Changes and Progress Observed

We are pleased to report substantial progress and positive changes throughout the 2023-2024 academic year:

Increased Student Engagement and Confidence:

- A noticeable increase in student participation in classes was observed, with 82% of teachers reporting this.
- Participation from students with Additional Educational Needs (AEN) significantly increased, reported by 78% of teachers.

- Students showed greater willingness to engage in group and peer work (70% of teachers observed this), and were more willing to speak out and ask/answer questions in class (74% of teachers).
- Student surveys from April 2024 indicated higher satisfaction with group work (72% "Strongly agreed/Agreed" they like it, up from 50% in previous unspecified data if applicable), and increased comfort in asking and answering questions (43% "Strongly agreed/Agreed").
- Parents also noted positive shifts, with 74% agreeing their child felt comfortable with group work and 58% agreeing their child felt comfortable asking questions. Furthermore, 57% of parents saw their child as more confident and content in school compared to post-COVID-19 lockdowns.

Enhanced Teaching Practices:

- Staff feedback in April 2024 showed an overwhelming consensus (96-100% "Always/Often") that questioning in classrooms is clear, differentiated, equitably distributed, and promotes higher-order thinking.
- Teachers reported effectively using various questioning techniques, including "wait time" and "no hands," which led to more thoughtful responses and wider student participation.
- Strategies like "Exit Tickets" became embedded, providing quick and valuable feedback on student understanding.
- Improvements were seen in targeting specific students, ensuring a broader range of voices were heard in class.

Academic Outcomes:

- Subject Departments noted improvements in students' understanding of questions and a reduction in marks lost due to misinterpretation.
- A narrower gap between the highest and lowest assessment results was observed in some classes, indicating that strategies supported students across the ability spectrum.

Our Secondary Focus: Punctuality Drive

- Following an identification and consultation process by the Punctuality and Attendance Committee, a dedicated Punctuality Drive was implemented in March 2024. The results of this focused drive showed significant improvements in student punctuality, particularly for P1 (morning) and P7 (after lunch) classes.
- School data (VShare) indicated a 19% drop in lates for P1 and P7 classes in the four weeks after Easter Break compared to the four weeks prior. Staff surveys also confirmed these positive changes, with 78% agreeing to improved punctuality in P1 and 80% in P7.

Future Planning

Looking ahead, our school has a proposed three-year SSE plan, with future focuses potentially including Reflection/Reflective Practices in Year 2 and Lifelong Learning, linked to Wellbeing and Sustainable Development, in Year 3. These plans will remain flexible, adapting based on ongoing feedback and evaluation to best serve our students' needs.

Update - June 2024 following WSE-MLL

In light of positive WSE-MLL Inspection feedback, we will extend our current focus into the next academic year, 2024 - 2025, to fully embed techniques and deepen this year's impact.